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Interview with Medardo Justiniano

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Side 1 - Interview with Col. Med Justiniano and Navy Capt. Villamater,
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C: This is the 25th of July 1985. I am in my hotel room at the Manila
Hotel visiting with Col. Justiniano and Captain Villamater. (spelled out each name)

You were telling me awhile ago, Colonel, in the taxi out to Magsaysay's
the personal feeling you had for General Lansdale. Would you repeat that for
the record please.

J: Well, I recall telling about Lansdale as a very outstanding military
officer because while he is highly qualified as a military technocrat, he is
better and his most respected specialty would be his qualification as a very
decocrat (??)
effective democrat (??) from down below the level of technocrats. (??). What
I mean by that is that while Lansdale was in such a high military position
as a staff officer and later on as one of the staff in JUSMAAG, all that he
would need to do would be to sit down with his guest in a beautiful office,
air conditioned, read reports, perhaps place them on the map and then evaluate
them and make some report. In the case of Lansdale, it was different. He
has placed more emphasis on being an expert on seeing actually what is on the
ground, what the people thinks on the ground, what is the situation on the
ground, which is not revealed in the technocratic maps that adorns an office
of the military establishment. That is how I would describe Ed Lansdale, my
good friend, and that is why I would say he is a very outstanding officer,
because he got way of solving problems. He would certainly be most effective
upstairs and downstairs.

C: How did you personally meet him?

J: Our meeting must have been started because of Col. Napoleon Valeriano,
because I was assigned to one office in G-2 of the military police command,
(??sounds like Office Park) AFWESPAC
which was then under / ? As I recall, Lansdale was with the G-2 of Office
Park ??, and I was chief of what they called the Order of Battle Section of

AFWESPAC

AFWESPAC

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J: the Military Police Command, which was a very new outfit in 1951 or 1948, and I was made the chief of that important and sensitive section.

C: What kind of special genius do you think Ed Lansdale had that enabled him to work with Filipinos so well? Before you begin to answer, do you know that he grew up in California (material omitted, California 1920's, prejudice). So what was it about him?

J: Well, I would say that Lansdale as part of his being a military man has such an appeal to both military and civilian life I suppose because of the way he would like you to do things. In other words if he says, for example, that he would like a certain thing done which is contrary to what you have suggested, to what you have planned, he would say it in such a nice way, something like this: he would say, don't you think this is how we should treat the problem in such a disarming and very charming way of saying things, and in case there is some controversial point, he has a nice way of saying well, why don't we have it this way. In other words, the military way of saying it is entirely removed from the way he would want things done according to what he thinks, and that is what makes him very amiable and sometimes I would say that is the reason why he, we, or I would rather do it that way, because I feel that the responsibility of performing the job would fall more on my shoulder rather than on his. For example, he wants you to do something, and he would say, what do you think about doing it this way? In such a very nice, disarming voice. It is so very hard to deny him, to discuss with him in an ugly way, because of the way he says things. If Lansdale, for example, in a lighter sense would be courting a woman, perhaps that woman would have difficulty in saying

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J: oh, Mr. Lansdale, it is so hard to deny you a kiss, just give you
two (Laughter)

(conversation omitted about the tape recorder)

C: How do you suppose it was that Lansdale and Magsaysay became such
very good friends?

J: I can see that that could be the natural course of events, because
before Magsaysay became Defense Secretary or before he ever dreamed of becoming
Defense Secretary, he was also a man on the ground. I remember he was a
Congressman and at a certain unexpected time at night he would come to our
town and see how things are being done in our town. He would look at the
H _____? Huks who were in my town, especially because this _____ Huks are not
placed in bars; they live with me. It is strange and perhaps there are people
who do not believe it, but one of the things that we were able to do, with the
also Bohannan
blessings of Lansdale and _____/ in this regard, when we had about
1,175 _____ subversive, who we could have sent to jail, what we did was
not to send them to jail. What we did was to put up a place where they could
live with me, so I was placed in the center of a town where my house was
located and around me were place barracks and then these Huks were all around
me. Of course, there were about 3 or 4 soldiers and at the end of the day, I
would at 5 o' clock there was a Philippine flag there, I would be interrogating
them while they sit down in an easy chair like this, and asking them personal
question: why did you become a Huk? What caused you to become a Huk? With
this system of approach, interrogation became so simplified, sometimes in the
middle of the night one of these commanders would come to me and tell me:
Captain, I was a Captain then--Captain, I am sorry I have not told you the truth.
I woke you up because my conscience hounds me, so I would like to come up now

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J: with the whole truth. And then I would come up and say, don't tell me of this tonight; you deserve a rest and I deserve a rest. We expect all these things, that's how I put it--we expect all these things to happen, so we can talk about it some other time. That's how I put it. Of course, while this was done, you know, in some sort of a gimmick. I would say that I was concerned that these people were being investigated by different agencies, and now they come to me and tell me they have not told them the truth. As if their confession was nothing to me, as if I expected them to be that way. So at that time of treatment, well, I called it a heart to heart treatment in my lecture in the States--heart to heart treatment. They come up and they open their hearts. See, now, this was what Magsaysay was observing when he was coming to our town as an unexpected visitor. As a matter of fact, some of the JUSMAAG officers, generals of that, would even say that we were...I was 38.?.we were too much of a risk with this experiment. I used to tell them, well, somebody has got to take the risk. Besides I think these people are not really guilty of Communism. Most of them are not literate types; most of them are farmers, laborers, drunkards, people that have been neglected by society, who because of their frustration decided to join any organization that came their way. And then there was this indoctrination of the Communist party, is oftentimes effective, so here comes a man who does not^{know}/where to go and here comes a Communist propagandist. And this fellow does not even know what a Soviet is, what a Communist is, what a Stalin is, nothing at all. And then you see he joins the Stalin University, he puts a hammer and sickle earring here in his ears, and that's that. To me, I saw that above all, this fellow is a Filipino. To me, I saw, that living with them convinced me that they

J: became Communists, if you had put it that way, because, not because of conviction, because of the neglect of the government. So then the product of mis-government. I came into the picture, I saw what should be done. I saw that we should live with them, I saw that we should treat them with what you call a heart to heart sincerity, because when they see this heart to heart sincerity, I tell you then they will do anything for you.

So Magsaysay came into this picture where we were operating and observed on the ground ??
this underground level, which was also one of the characteristics of Lansdale. So this characteristics binded them together, and that I would say would be the best answer to your question.

C: How did R.M. phrase it, something like, those that have the least must be loved the most.

J: Oh... (background voice answers)

C: Those that have less in life must have more in law.

J: That is one...and then there is another one: A little more...

Background voice: Government start _____ people. A little more for the stomach, a little more shelter...it is right there inscribed in the ...in Magsaysay's building...

C: That's right...the ten commandments of Magsaysay. That is one of the places I have got...

J: I think you should see it.

But I would say that this thing, you know, came up because of the ground approach to the problem, and the fact that Lansdale and Magsaysay saw this together, and after that they put out a lot of studies and things, and came up with such very nice words. We never knew exactly what ...we were just thinking then that we were serving our country, we were fighting Communism,

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J: and we saw an oppressed people who were not really bad, who can be
and reformed
frustrated?/.so many stories I can tell you about how this reform movement
by conversion came up. Unbelievable that there were
commanders who had been not, and without anything from
us, they were the ones. In one instance, as a matter of fact, when perhaps
I should mention this...in one instance when our camp was going to be
attacked, the camp was saved from attack by one of these convertees. Because
when we apprehend a Huk at that time, usually after a second time of come,
in my camp, not as a prisoner. When we give them a pass so they can visit
their family, so then I sign the pass there and they go out. And then
sometimes in that pass like a certain commander is fighter?? I remember a
certain commander's fighter??specifically--his name is Panganiban.

C: Would you like to spell that for the recorder?

J: Commander fighter?? was the name that he has. P A N G A N I B A N
He is from central Luzon, specifically from Bali Ponga (sp?). All right, this
fellow asked me for a pass for 24 hours. Ok, I say why don't you spend more
than 24 hours--I give you a pass for 2 days--spend it with your family and
have a nice time, be careful, and that's all. And I let him loose. That very
night the fellow came back. About 2 o'clock in the morning he was knocking
at my hut. Filipino hut. Sir, I have something important. What's it, I said?
I was sleeping--why are you back here? And then he said something like, well,
sir, something happened. Well, they were forcing me to guide them to attack
our town. I told him, of course, those things are expected. I told him, we
are ready for that--why would I be afraid when you are here? In other words,
I told him that we were not afraid, but actually I wanted to get my gun (laughter).
So they are not attacking any more, I solved the problem. So I said, I am not

J: concerned; let's talk tomorrow. He said, sir, I have another problem, I have another thing to tell you. Then he came up with the sack, then he opened the sack. And my God, do you know what's in the sack? It was the head of his commander. Why did you do this, I say. He said, sir, he was trying to force me; I had to defend myself, I had to defend our camp. This is just unbelievable. There are two cases of this. One of them is a certain _____ --they are all tied up together. So you can see from that the _____ by _____ can do. many of what conversion/ It needs a little courage to do it, living with them, sharing with them, eating with them, things like this, and spending more for them. Because at that time, by the way, each prisoner that you take is entitled to only one peso, that includes three meals a day. Ok, let me tell this and Ed Lansdale, perhaps he will know something about it. Now I violated this, this one peso a day; I violated it, and as a matter of fact, I have not been paid for 2/3 years. I spent for these people this way. Outside of the one peso per day, I send our medical men. One of them is Dr. Augusto (sp) DeMon _____. I try to find out from our intelligence coverage whether this man has a child, mother, father, and find out what is the condition of their family. When I find out that they are sick, I send the doctor there. The doctor has to buy his own medicine, and that comes from me. Subsistence-- I have defeated, they are not prisoners, they are not entitled to one peso. Medicine, everything that they need, I will give it to them. And the Huk will never know that, until he visits family. So you can imagine. You see the point here, you are a prisoner, you know you are going to be placed in jail, and when you go home and see your family...to a Filipino that is enough to melt his heart. So I came into trouble with the budget officer and the accounting office, and that was not good. That is one problem we had. The

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J: other problem was with _____ who became chief justice of the Supreme Court. (background conversation) At that time he was called the general officer...that if you detain the Huk and spend 50 pesos on that fellow in one month, you have got to have a conviction. In other words, he would put somebody in jail. You know, you would not believe it. Out of this 1,175 Huks that I am talking about I have in that center, he wanted details. So I was being questioned by FredCastro??. He said, look, you are spending so much money, but this is against regulations. I said, I am an officer in the field exposing my life and doing everything for my country, I can spend even a thousand pesos for each one if I know that in conscience I can even things out even to God. That was my honest conviction. And I am not going to give you any conviction why, because I saw that these people are innocent people. They are the victims of injustice and the victims of mis-government. They are not really Communists or pro-Communists...they are good Filipinos, so I will stand for them. And I think as an officer we should stand the way I am standing now, and Fred, you must back me. That's what I told Fred Castro (sp?)

So, because of this...oh, also, some of these Huks had been to Manila. I bring them to the carnival, I take them to show; show them what's life here. See, let them enjoy. And as I say, at 5 o'clock we discuss things there, ask them questions, how did you enjoy the film? Where is Moscow? Where is this, Stalin, and so on and so on. You are better off here--don't talk of Moscow; don't talk of the Stalin University. See, that is in the later stage already, and then all of them became closer to me.

C: Did any of them ever escape while they...

J: Only one, yes. And it was because...it was Commander Narro (sp?) who escaped. And he escaped because his wife, escaped by the Communists... so only one out of the 1,175. And I believe if it was not for the wife, he would not have escaped also. Let me see if I have a picture of the fellow who escaped, so I can show you later on.

So that was the story of Magsaysay and _____ that I would like to bring up. And perhaps in that connection, I am stressing the point here of reforming. I would like to talk again of another fellow. His name is N I C A N O R A C O S T A . When he got in to us--this fellow is a graduate of Stalin University--he was what we call the G-2, ____ force the regional commander _____. He was a terror (?). Well, anyway, the fellow was captured by us and I gave him a name--I usually give them names, American names. I called him Batman. So that's the name I gave him, Batman (laughter). Ok. I made him my orderly so he lives with me in my hut.

(background conversation -- unintelligible)

He lives with me in my hut now. And this is _____, I think, when you told me about the mission in Central America, I think this is very important. Now Batman has been with me for about a month or so perhaps and well, he does things for me; he polishes my shoes; see, he was my orderly in my house. Ok.

(background conversation about room service)

J: Let me continue by the way that story about the money accountability before I go to Batman.

Then Magsaysay eventually became President of the Philippines. The General Audit Office was under a certain Pedro Yemanez (sp?), he was the one, the final say, the boss, audited by a special way, but my accounts have not been cleared. So one day the President called for Mr. Yemanez (interruption--

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J: looking for pictures). Well, I will show you later on. Well, when Mr. Yemanez saw these top secret pictures of our intelligence work, by the way, we have our own intelligence system. When he saw pictures about this, our pictures, you want to see some more of the pictures of the person your defense department does not approve? It might even endanger my life, that's what Yemanez said, I realize now what Major Justiniano is doing. So the very next day after the conference between Magsaysay and Yemanez took place, Mr. Yemanez went to the auditor of the defense department and asked the auditor there, where are the papers of Major Justiniano. And right there he cleared everything. So in one (laughter) record, all of my papers were cleared.

Now coming back...we had this fellow and he was my orderly as I say, and I was transferred, so somebody took over my place and then Batman was released. And then he was in Manila--oh, he did a lot of damage again in Manila. He was making a lot of trouble. But underneath he was the most disciplined, he was the best orderly I ever had. Well, one day for some reason, Batman was placed in jail and accused of murder. He killed a woman (material omitted--on death row, chaplain asked him to go visit Batman, Batman said did not murder her. Batman would not accept help because real murderer had 4 children and a wife. Batman wanted his eyes to go to eye bank.) I can never forget Batman because this is ^{by conversion} sample of what ??/ can do. And these are samples ^{inspired by both} /Ramon Magsaysay and Ed Lansdale together...

C: That's a great story.

J: Great story (continues about Batman, eye bank, material omitted.
Living with outcasts of society, his speech)

We should be coming back to my discussion with Fred Castro--why don't you want them to be convicted? I said, look. Fred, when you convict one of

J: these, it is still credited to my credit, but to me it would haunt our concepts and your conscience, if the children of the Huks are looked at do not appreciate Communism, and while these people like lepers. While these people/are the victims of mis-government and here you and I come because of a regulation that we should have one convicted...so what happens? What happens, Fred? We are not doing right. What we should do is to defend them and find out what we should do, even if we are doing things against the government. Here is where, and this is why I appreciate this, here is where Lansdale comes in. He saw all this and more perhaps, because I know how well he covers this up. Now in the latter part of my_____, I realized that the man appreciates this and I realize how he appreciated me. So that is where I saw the greatness of this fellow, that's why all these things I am telling you is related to both of them, because to me Magsaysay and Lansdale are one and the same; even though one is an American, they have something in common. And I happened to be in between, to be a little _____ between two giants. So that is probably how I would describe Lansdale.

C: I read in some bitter American newspapers and American magazines that one of your earlier citizens, a man named Tanyata (sp?), used to play tennis with Lansdale, and he made a speech to Tanyata attacking Lansdale, Before that time, so I read, Lansdale had picked Tanyata to be president. After that he dropped him, looked around, found Magsaysay, and that if it had not been for Lansdale, the actions of the U.S. government; you know, carrying out...Magsaysay would never have become president. What do you think of that? How do you react?

J: Well, I would say that this is a very sensitive question that nationalism hops in, and I suppose your point would come to this. When we talk of nationalism, I don't think you need to tell me that I am a Filipino, and I don't need to tell

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J: you that you are an American. As far as I can see, what I can see, is American is indispensable to my life because I am a part of the culture. I cannot even say that I am a pure Filipino, because if you trace my ancestry, I have Chinese, Spanish, Filipino, but I am brought under American tutelage, so I am not even an American. So you can see the so-called nationalism...I don't think that you are a pure American. I don't know how you call yourself, no? But I think you are a mixture of German, or whatever it is, so this matter of nationalism to me is a mockery of political convenience, which can be exploited by shrewd politicians; the way they would profit by it, that's how I would explain this. As a matter of fact, I don't know that our present crop of politicians can be _____, because when they talk of nationalism, I have my doubts if they are really nationalists. I have my doubts. And another thing is this, as I was telling them, because some of the oppositionists, even Senator _____ (material omitted: have direct line to senator). Whether it is an American, whether it is a Russian, Chinese, etc., all these people have got their own national interest. Now, if you will ask me, I would always prefer the American than the Russian...

(laughter--material omitted--I don't drink)

One thing I would say is this, Lansdale might...if I recall right, another was head of the Peoples' Court, which was tried (?), collaboration. Now just for example this matter of collaboration, ^{the} ^{issue} / nationalistic / _____ would come in. You would be surprised if you looked at the record; I defended President Larau (sp?). As I was telling you in the car, I had a letter signed by General McArthur that I could leave (?) with President Larau (sp?). Of course, a letter at that time signed by McArthur was really _____, you know the meaning of doubt, at that time, because to be caught by the Japanese is enough to...that is why,

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J: I have burns around here--that is a burn. Burn here, burn here, burn here. And my left ear has been burst because of a water hose...Japanese; so all this blood and water came out; my left ear is busted (material omitted). So that is how I would answer this question.

END OF SIDE 1

SIDE 2

C: I was just thinking I guess about your answer. Someone also said that President Quirino was doing a pretty good job, and that he should have been reelected in that election where Ramon Magsaysay was chosen. But that Quirino who was a good Filipino president, displeased the United States, and so the United States chose someone else. How do you react to that?

J: Well, as I say, each nation will have their own interests, and as I say, we cannot dispense with _____?

C: Why?

J: Why? My God, how can we dispense, when I speak your language better than I speak Tagalog. I was brought up under Americans. _____ Here I am, I am one-third Chinese, one-third Filipino, but I am speaking English to you, and I think you understand my language...

C: What did you say?

(Laughter)

(Background conversation omitted)

J: You know what I think would have been better here under the present situation, it would be something like this. For example, right now, I was telling you about a speech, I would like to show you, and after that speech there was some feeling about me getting some assignment in _____ Balakanyan (phonetic) because of the seriousness of the talk I spoke in. Well, I say this, yes, I decline

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J: an offer from the President of the Phillipines, especially under such a crisis as we are facing now, but I would do this as a professional Filipino, devoid of politics. In other words, we can solve our problem, but it should be without politics. What I mean by this, is this--(summary: sent telegram, ok accepting position given by president, but will accompany letter of acceptance with a letter of resignation in case I see there is no sincerity in what he does, I will resign as soon as possible. Accepts for 6 months only. Ineffective, everybody wants power; but somebody who wants to get out after 6 months, well, ok. I still occupy some/intelligence position, but because of my speech in Bismarck (?)...)

classified
JUSMAAG ??

C: Now, when did you make that? When was that speech given?

J: March 24th. I have it here; I will give you a copy. I just showed this morning an approval, it was marked July 5th, because I filed my letter of resignation from that office because I do not want to involve the office in this JUSMAAG (??) speech which I think created quite a stir.

(background conversation--unintelligible--refused to be paid so won't be led around by nose; the moment they start paying you they start controlling you--unidentified voice)

J: It is very difficult to solve this problem unless we are sincere in what we are doing. By the way, this thing that I am talking about, the crisis, is not just my own, it is not just my own idea. When I talk to you about this, I am telling you also about what military officers are feeling, what some ministers are feeling.

C: Are they? There are many that feel as you?

J: Yes, there are. Generals at that. Generals who are occupying top positions. As a matter of fact, there is a unit of young military officers;

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J: I have not joined it...

(background conversation)

J: Just let me finish this. So I have all the documents...but what got me here is when I analyzed the first meeting with the President, I could see that all the things the President was telling about was baloney. Because the first thing ask is, give me proofs and evidences and I will act. (summary: the President has all the resources and he has not done anything in the past 20 years. So I am watching; that is why I have not said any word about it. I pity and I regret these people. These people, I can just see that the President is just putting them somewhere. And if the people in Washington feel that some steps are being done, I don't think...I think they are crazy or they don't know what is happening here because just the first meeting with the reform group and that statement by the President, that's enough. As I said, what should be done? Put one bunch before the firing squad. Then all the people will follow you and/that is the first sign that Magsaysay's spirit is still alive.)

C: We laughed about this in the car, but is there a Ramon Magsaysay around now?

J: The spirit is there, but ...

There are people who can take over for Magsaysay, but the thing is ... if you ask me about Magsaysay, I ask you now, where is Lansdale?

C: Well, he is elderly...he is 79 years old.

J: Exactly. So my answer to that is, bring in the Lansdale and there will be a Magsaysay. That is the essence of my talk at JUSMAAG (?) as you can see here. Because I did not just speak here. I put up reasons and observations as to why things could not be done. And I said, where is the spirit, the sincerity that binds Lansdale? And your question is direct to the point also.

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J: Where is the spirit of Lansdale and Magsaysay? There is none. So
that is how I would answer you. If there were another Lansdale, there would
be another Magsaysay.

C: Well, Colonel, I know how much of a rush you are in this afternoon,
so I am going to shut the machine off and give us time to look at the papers
you brought along.